

**Q:** Good afternoon. My name is Kim Hewitt and I'm here at the Falls at Cordingly Dam with Manny Brown. Together we're participating in the Newton Talks Oral History Project that is being conducted with the Newton Free Library, Historic Newton, and the Newton Senior Center. So, Manny, can you tell us what your relationship is with Newton?

**A:** Before I moved to Newton I lived in South Brookline, and I had a house I owned, had nine stairs to get into the house, and the laundry and the drier were in the basement. And my wife had two knee replacements, so she couldn't do that walking, so we moved to the Towers at Chestnut Hill and where there are elevators and stairs only used in case of emergency.

**Q:** Okay. And how long have you lived in Newton again?

**A:** I moved there in 1983 and when my wife passed in 2008 I stayed there until 2011. And I couldn't handle the, I got sick and I couldn't handle it anymore, so I came here.

**Q:** Okay. So, what were you doing before you entered the service?

**A:** I was-- Well, I went through, the government had a Drafting School to become a draftsman in Maine, and I didn't like it, and I left. And I couldn't get a job, because I was 1B, I was rejected on account of my eyesight. So I went to the Draft Board and I asked when I was going to be called and he said, "You're going to be called in January." I said, "Well, I don't have any money and my father lost his job, his company went bankrupt. I want to go to the Army." They said, "Well, would you like to go in October?" I said, "The quicker the better." So I went in October, and so that was 1942.

**Q:** So, how did you adapt to military life? Was that hard?

**A:** No, it's just a job. I enjoyed it, because I went to summer camp as a kid, so I knew what it was to be away from home.

**Q:** Okay. How did you stay in touch with family and friends while you were in the Army?

**A:** Mostly by mail.

**Q:** Did you correspond often?

**A:** No.

**Q:** So, I want to talk more about where exactly you served, and do you remember arriving there?

**A:** Abilene, Texas, Camp Barkley was the name of the camp.

**Q:** Okay.

**A:** And I joined the 90<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. And I was in the infantry from day one until I got discharged.

**Q:** Okay. Were you anywhere else?

**A:** Well, we went on maneuvers in Louisiana and then in California in the Mojave Desert, then back to Fort Dix in New Jersey, and then Europe.

**Q:** Where in Europe were you stationed?

**A:** Well, we were getting ready, we didn't know it, but we were getting ready for D-Day. We arrived on Easter Sunday in March, I believe, and we trained, and then we ended up in Cardiff, Wales. And then before D-Day for the week before they would put us in a warehouse with no beds, and we slept on the floor. And every morning we would go to the docks, no boats. The fifth morning the boat was there. And we didn't know. We thought we were going to Italy. But if I knew geography, I was always with the Company Commander, they took us to a gazebo surrounded by eight armed soldiers, and they were the battalion. There were a Captain and the company headquarters man, and four other Company Commanders. They showed us a map with no names and they showed us a peninsula. We didn't know what it was. It was Cherbourg. No names, just you saw the ocean and a piece of land sticking into the ocean, and that was where we landed on D-Day.

**Q:** When did you realize you weren't going to Italy?

**A:** We never knew. We were going up and down the English Channel for four days, and we didn't know what, we didn't know. All we would do is line up. There were 5,000 soldiers on this boat, and we spent most of the time standing in line waiting to have breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

**Q:** Can you tell me a bit of, or sorry, can you tell me a few of your most memorable experiences while you were away?

**A:** One of the saddest experiences was in Cardiff, Wales. It was Passover and a Lieutenant asked all of the Jewish fellows if they wanted to go to the Synagogue, which we- there were eight of us and they told us, "After the services they're going to invite you for dinner. Turn them down, because there is not enough food for themselves." And after services an old man came over to me and he invited me for dinner. And I told him I had a previous engagement and he knew well I was lying. I didn't know anybody in Cardiff, Wales. Tears came to his eyes. I said, "I'm sorry, I have a previous engagement." And that was one of the saddest things.

**Q:** Do you recall any particularly humorous events or anything funny that kind of happened in your time?

**A:** There is nothing funny in war.

**Q:** Do you remember the day your service ended? Do you remember the day your service ended?

**A:** When I got discharged from the service in October of 1945.

**Q:** So, what was that like for you to come home?

**A:** No, I spent five days in Normandy in a field hospital where I was operated on. I spent five months in England, and a strange thing happened. I was on a stretcher, waiting to be placed in a ward, and a medical doctor came over and asked, looked at my dog tags. Number three was my first number, which means you're from New England. And he said to me, "Where are you from?" I says, "Boston." He says, "What street?" And I told him 42 Philips Street in Boston. He said, "We lived at 40." But I never knew him. He was a medical doctor. Never saw him after that.

And I had a cousin that was a Colonel who was stationed in England and he came to the hospital to visit me in England. And after he left they treated me like I was a General, the nurses and the doctors, and that was it.

**Q:** So, what was it like to return to civilian life?

**A:** Very easy. I got a job in an office supply company, and I worked there for three years. And I was told it was an office supply company for sale. The owner had passed and his widow did not want the business. And it was up for bid, and I bid, and their attorney called me and said, "You can have the business at what you bid." He says, "You were not the high bidder. You were the low bidder." I said, "Why are you giving me--" He says, "I think you're going to make a success of the business," which fortunately I did.

**Q:** So, how did your services and your experience affect your life and your outlook on war and military in general?

**A:** Well, you ended up with a couple of very close friends, and my wife and I, and our son was then 10 years old, we went to Washington to visit her sister, and we used to get letters from the old 90<sup>th</sup> Division Company, and our former cook was a chef at the Willard Hotel, and we were in downtown Washington and I said to my wife, "I'm going to go visit, see if I can find Sargent Pass, our old cook." So, my wife and her sister went shopping, which women usually do, and my son and I went to the Willard Hotel, and we asked for Donald Pass. Out comes Donald Pass with the big white hat, and he said, "Manny." He says, "They told me you got killed." I said, "Luckily here I am." And we had a 10 minute conversation. He had to go back to work. And that was it.

And then I had a business on Boylston Street, Copley Square, and a former Sargent in my company came in. Sargent Barka, he was from New Mexico. I said, "What are you doing in Boston?" He said, "I'm an Agricultural Commissioner in New Mexico and we're having a convention in Boston." I said, "How about coming to my house for dinner tonight?" He says, "No I can't. We have meetings to go to." Never saw him again. It was the only two that I met that it was we were close with in the company.

An infantry company consists of 187 men, so you don't get to know all of them. Some you never see from one day to the other.

**Q:** But you kept a few close friends you said?

**A:** Pardon me?

**Q:** You kept a few close friends through life after the service?

**A:** Not really, because you never see them again. I kept in touch with, the closest one was Angelo Colombo who lived in Saint Louis, Missouri, and I used to call him occasionally.

**Q:** So, is there anything else you want to share with us about your experience in the service?

**A:** Our Lieutenant was giving us a lecture in Texas about sun stroke, "Make sure you keep your helmet on at all times." Well, I was busy talking to the fellow who was sitting next to me on the side of the hill, and he said, "Brown, how do you get sun stroke?" And I said, "From the sun." And he had it in for me. Now, we're in Louisiana on maneuvers and we got a new weapon called a bazooka. It was like a stove pipe, an instrument that two men, one fired and one put the shell in. It was an anti-tank weapon. Now, you stayed in the middle of the company and when they yelled, "Tanks on the left" you ran to the left, they yelled, "Tanks to the right" you ran to the right. So, Louisiana, very easily you get heated up. At the end of the day we, I ended up lying on the ground, shivering, and this Lieutenant who I didn't get along with said, "Throw a blanket on him." And another Lieutenant came by, he said, "Take him to the medics." I had pneumonia.

**Q:** So, can you tell me about the medals you have here?

**A:** Well, the one, the one on the left is the Bronze Star, the one on the right is the Purple Heart, the Combat Infantry Badge with the wreath means you were in actual combat. They have it if you weren't in combat and you were in that kind of a division you didn't get the wreath. And the

Good Conduct Medal, because I behaved, and there is the Europe Africa Medal, but I was never in Africa, except on a tour with my wife, the World War Two Victory Medal, the French Medal is from being a participant from D-Day. Purple Heart is when you get wounded. And this was a Marksman, this was for Sharpshooter, this is for Marksman, and the stripes are I was a Sargent. And this was a lapel saying you served in World War Two.

**Q:** How did you get your Purple Heart?

**A:** Pardon me?

**Q:** How did you get your Purple Heart?

**A:** When you get wounded you get a Purple Heart. It's not a nice gift.

**Q:** Well, thank you for taking the time to talk with us.

**A:** My pleasure.

**Q:** We appreciated it. We're really happy to include you in the Newton Talks Oral History, and that's all.

**A:** Okay. Thank you.

**Q:** Thank you very much. Thanks for sharing everything.

\_\_\_: Good job, Manny.

END OF INTERVIEW